

SECTION III  
R6 USE OF COLLABORATION



# REGION 6 PARTNERSHIP STATEMENT AND COLLABORATION

## PROCESS OF INCLUSION

Each Region 6 partner values human health and the environment and strives to ensure that each is fully protected. Each partner also has their own priorities, goals, objectives, and strategies and best understands their own unique issues and circumstances. We also understand and acknowledge the value that each partner adds to the process of protecting human health and the environment. We have, therefore, carefully considered our partners' priorities, concerns and local issues in the development of this plan.

Several actions have been taken to ensure full collaboration with our state and tribal partners. In February, 2003, we sent each state a copy of our draft regional plan and asked them to review the document and provide comments, questions and criticisms. Follow-up discussions were held between senior managers of the respective organizations to answer questions and resolve differences. In early November, 2003, the Regional Administrator sent a letter to each State Commissioner reiterating the importance of state input into the strategic planning process. In that letter, the Regional Administrator asked each State Environmental Commissioner to provide a summary of their state's environmental priorities for the next 3-5 years. At the same time, Regional Division Directors were directed to contact their state counterparts in each program area to compare strategic priorities and identify any areas which might require further collaboration. Another draft of the Regional Plan, with State goals identified, was provided to the States in mid-December 2003 with a request, not only for general comments, but also for the identification of any areas where their goals have not been fully incorporated into our plan. The Region then held calls with each of the five states to discuss the strategic plan and the issues that each state submitted in their written response to the RA's letter. These calls were highly productive in identifying additional issues and honing preexisting issues raised by each state. These comments were further incorporated into the regional strategic plan. Additionally, the Region has agreed to assist the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality with their implementation of an ECOS pilot project to improve alignment between Texas and Regional processes.

Where tension exists between State or Tribe, goals or strategies, Region 6 will strive to mutually resolve the issue for the benefit of all parties involved. If conflicts exist between our partners and EPA, then Region 6 will advocate in conjunction with States and Tribes to influence national goals or strategies.

Input was also sought from our tribal partners. During the first quarter of FY2004, we contacted each of the 66 tribes within the Region's boundaries and asked each to identify their top environmental priorities for the next 3-5 years. We received feedback from approximately two thirds of those tribes. Their priorities are listed in the Section entitled "Tribes." We have also included strategic planning as a topic of discussion at each of our recent tribal summit meetings. These priorities were carefully considered and incorporated into the strategies and goals outlined in our plan.

We view the communication and coordination efforts to date as a first step in the development of a Region 6 Plan that will be a living, evolving document. Our goal is to use this plan to continue meaningful engagement between ourselves and our partners as we further develop program priorities, annual performance goals and resource distribution proposals. With the Region, States and Tribes working in concert, we believe that this plan can be used as a valuable tool to inform and influence the development of Annual Program Guidance, annual performance goals and Performance Partnership Agreements (PPAs), thereby, reducing transaction costs, increasing efficiency and providing maximum protection to the environment and human health.

## **PRIORITIES OF OUR PARTNERS**

Region 6 has attempted to integrate the priorities identified by our State and Tribal partners into this strategic plan. As States and Tribes develop new priorities and shifts occur in current priorities, then this document can be modified to reflect those changes. In this way, the document will serve as a vehicle for continuous communication between the Region and its Partners on strategic thinking.

## **INITIATIVES**

The Region is currently working on several initiatives to improve the process through which the Region works with its partners. By creating true partnerships with States, Tribes, and other organizations, the Region believes that protection of human health and the environment will be enhanced.

First, the Region is seeking to unify the various agreements that occur between each State and the Region during the year. This concept, known as the “one document” concept, envisions all the commitments between a State and the Region, including Regional obligations, in one agreement which then becomes fixed and can only be re-opened if there is agreement between both the Regional Administrator and the leader of the state agency signing the agreement. This unified document will be the basis for discussions between the Region and State and will address issues, such as strategic thinking, annual work plans, measurement systems, accountability of both the State and Region, communication issues, delineation of roles and responsibilities, and innovations activities. Second, the Region is exploring needed revisions to the oversight process. The Region believes that it is time to revise the current oversight systems to reflect an increased role of States and other entities with delegated programs as true partners in the process. Currently, the Region is developing proposals that will increase State opportunities to participate in the process, such as joint program evaluations using jointly determined criteria, differential oversight schemes, and increased State autonomy in resolving issues raised in the joint program evaluations.

Additionally, the Region is developing a draft Partnership Policy upon which it hopes to solicit feedback upon from the states in the near future. This policy provides guidelines for achieving true partnership between the Region and States.

## **Use of Collaboration by Region 6**

Region 6 believes in utilizing collaborative processes to achieve improved results through conflict resolution, conflict prevention, communication, and problem solving. By bringing together the energy and ideas of all interested parties, creative solutions and additional resources are often brought to bear. In addition, by allowing all parties to be heard, such processes result in decisions which enjoy greater acceptance and support, making implementation more effective.

The Region has been very successful in using collaboration to resolve conflicts. For instance:

- Region 6 facilitated the resolution of a major water quality standards conflict between the States of Arkansas and Oklahoma, resulting in a Statement of Joint Principles and Actions by the two states that will improve water quality in shared waters.
- At the El Paso Metals Superfund site, the Region helped to convene a meeting with parties from the City of El Paso, federal health agencies, State environmental and health agencies, and neighborhood representatives, to discuss issues and health concerns relating to EPA's soil cleanup plan. The meeting resulted in the formation of three multi-party workgroups to develop new approaches to help resolve those concerns.

Region 6 is also using collaborative processes to avoid conflicts from developing initially or catching the issue before a crisis ensues. For instance:

- Region 6 has set up a series of regular meetings with private agricultural interests, state agricultural agencies, state environmental agencies, and other federal agencies to discuss concerns with environmental regulation in the farming sector. By acting early, the Region was able to head-off impending problems and develop pro-active solutions, such as new approaches to compliance assistance in that sector.
- The Region has also convened meetings with petrochemical industry representatives to gain their perspective on how best to address homeland security threats. This has allowed the Regional Response Team to develop an important network of industry contacts with expertise on emergency response issues affecting their sector.

Collaborative techniques have also proven very effective as a tool for enhancing communication. For example:

- The Space Shuttle Columbia disaster necessitated an exceptionally high degree of collaboration among EPA, NASA, and FEMA, as well as among numerous state and local agencies. A “Joint Information Center” was established so that the federal agencies spoke with one voice on issues that arose related to the Shuttle recovery efforts.
- A year ago, Region 6 brought together federal agencies, State environmental agencies, Tribal members, environmental groups, and community groups for a Regional Listening Session on Environmental Justice issues and possible solutions. Now, several states and tribes have indicated an interest in partnering with EPA to hold listening meetings to focus attention on problems affecting their communities.

Collaborative processes have also been used effectively in Region 6 as a problem solving tool, with parties coming together to work out thorny issues. For example:

- Senior managers from Region 6 and State of Texas meet frequently in Waco – the halfway point between their respective offices in Dallas and Austin – to work through issues that have become “stuck” in one agency or the other. The most recent meeting led to a joint protocol for establishing reasonable assumptions for risk assessments at combustion facilities.
- The Region, working with state, local, and federal agencies, in addition to several environmental groups, used facilitated mediation to resolve concerns regarding the Houston/Galveston Area SIP submission, thereby averting restrictions on federal highway funding in the Houston area.
- Region 6 worked with the City of Oklahoma City, the University of Oklahoma, community groups, private developers, as well as state and federal agencies, to find effective ways to redevelop a contaminated, industrial section of Oklahoma City.

Region 6 and its States and Tribes have found that collaborative techniques are not only useful in resolving many types of issues, but that their use is also very efficient in both staff time and financial resources. As budgets decrease, agencies must find tools for cutting costs and being more efficient in resolving disputes and other issues; collaboration is one such tool. Resolving issues early avoids

high litigation costs, and also allows the agencies to focus resources on their shared mission to protect human health and the environment.

Collaboration also has the benefit that it builds trust and relationships among the interested parties. This makes the resolution longer lasting and better perceived by the participants.

The Region takes seriously the need to be a good and effective convener. This is especially challenging in the area of tribal relations, where cultural differences are great. Instead of mandating that tribes follow western patterns and practices of conflict resolution and communication, Region 6 has tried to adapt itself to the patterns and practices of the tribes with which it interacts. For instance:

- In working with the Mescalero Apache to resolve water quality issues on their reservation, Region 6 adopted a collaborative approach to solving the problem, which complimented the Tribe's philosophy.
- The Region is currently working on a project to identify specific conflict resolution and prevention techniques from tribal peacekeepers. From this, the Region hopes to learn about additional conflict resolution techniques and enhance the communication and dispute resolution between the Region and tribes. Additionally, the Region is developing mediation training that will focus on cross-cultural issues in dispute resolution.

Region 6 is seeking to expand its use of collaborative processes. For instance:

- The Region is seeking to further incorporate partnership concepts into the relationship with its states through the joint development of "program review procedures" to replace "oversight protocols." The new procedures will include: jointly established program criteria, a jointly agreed upon and objective set of measurements, and a jointly conducted program review to ascertain the results of state delegated program activities.
- To promote effective communication between the Region and its state partners, the Region is also changing the way in which Regional expectations are communicated to state partners. Through a "one document" process, the Region hopes to convey all expectations for the many state delegated programs in one document, instead of through the multiple, program specific agreements that currently take place.

Collaboration is a flexible tool that builds relationships, establishes trust, and can result in the greater achievement of Agency goals.

Although there are, of course, situations where litigation or other procedures are necessary, the Region believes that, where possible, collaborative processes should be employed.



# SECTION IV

## PROJECTED RESOURCES



## REGION 6 PROJECTED RESOURCES - FY 2004

Goal	Title	NPM	Appropriation	FTE	Dollars**
Goal 1	Clean Air and Global Climate Change	OAR	EPM	64.5	
Total Goal 1				64.5	
Goal 2	Clean and Safe Water	OW	EPM	165.0	
		OPPTS	EPM	1.4	
Total Goal 2				166.4	
Goal 3	Land Preservation and Restoration	OSWER	EPM	86.6	
		OSWER	LUST	3.5	
		OSWER	Oil Spills	1.5	
		OSWER	Superfund	96.8	
		OECA	LUST	0.8	
		OECA	Oil Spills	7.8	
		OECA	Superfund	64.0	
		OSWER	Base Closure	6.9	
Total Goal 3				267.9	
Goal 4	Healthy Communities and Ecosystems	OPPTS	EPM	16.9	
		OEI	EPM	1.2	
		OSWER	EPM	14.7	
		OA	EPM	2.2	
		OIA	EPM	6.9	
		OW	EPM	19.7	
Total Goal 4				61.6	

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Dollars will be available January 2004

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<b>REGION 6 PROJECTED RESOURCES - FY 2004</b>					
Goal	Title	NPM	Appropriation	FTE	Dollars
Goal 5	Compliance and Environmental Stewardship	OECA	EPM	193.5	
		OPPTS	EPM	8.8	
		OA	EPM	2.5	
		OW	EPM	6.1	
		OSWER	EPM	0.5	
Total Goal 5				211.4	
Enabling Resources				118.0	
For Support Staff					
TOTAL				889.8	

EPA will not receive its FY 2004 appropriation until January 2004. The Region 6 share of the appropriation will not be known until February/March 2004.



